



Botley West Solar Farm

Phase Two Community Consultation Leaflet

November 2023

Introduction

Photovoltaic Development Partners (PVDP) is proposing Botley West Solar Farm, a new solar farm in the west of Oxfordshire.

Botley West could deliver 840 megawatts (MW) of clean, affordable power to the National Grid, contributing to reducing carbon emissions and improving UK energy security.¹ The project will connect to a new National Grid substation, to be built by National Grid near Farmoor reservoir, to the west of Botley, hence the name Botley West.

We introduced our initial proposals during our first phase of community consultation, which was held for seven weeks between Thursday 3rd November and Thursday 22nd December 2022.

Since the end of our Phase One consultation, we have considered the feedback you gave us to develop our proposals further. Additionally, we have continued to undertake extensive environmental assessments, further refined our site layout and continued to engage with relevant groups and stakeholders.

This leaflet includes information about our second phase of community consultation, which will be open for ten weeks from 30th November 2023 until 8th February 2024. We encourage you to submit your feedback on our updated proposals during this time.

Details on how to contact us can be found on the back of this leaflet.

Who We Are

Photovoltaic Development Partners (PVDP) is a developer of solar power projects. We have a 19-year track record of delivering large-scale solar projects in Europe and Japan.

PVDP will be the Applicant for this project on behalf of SolarFive Ltd, which holds the connection agreement with National Grid and is licensed by Ofgem as an electricity generator.

¹For context, 840 MW is enough to power the equivalent of approximately 330,000 homes. You can see how this figure is calculated on our website.

Our Phase Two Consultation

We are now inviting feedback on our updated proposals for Botley West Solar Farm.

We want to hear your comments and ideas on topics such as:

- Our updated proposals, including the site layout and cable routes.
- The information presented in our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR).
- Our proposed environmental enhancement measures to deliver benefits, such as biodiversity net gain and new recreational connectivity across the site.
- Our proposed mitigation measures to minimise or avoid the potential impacts on the environment and local communities.

Have Your Say

You can take part in this phase of consultation by:



Provide your feedback

You can do this through an online feedback form on our website, by completing a feedback form at one of our events, by writing to us or by email. You can find all of our contact details on the back page of this leaflet.



Attend one of our community information events

We are holding a series of drop-in information events across the area. These events provide an opportunity to view materials and discuss the proposals with members of the team. Details of our information events can be found on page 22.



Viewing our materials

Our dedicated project website (www.botleywest.co.uk) provides the latest information, including relevant documents and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs). Here you can view and download all consultation documents and information. Materials are also available at our Community Access Point (CAP) sites listed on page 23.



Contact our team

You can get in touch with our team free-of-charge by phone, post or email. These details are listed on the back cover of this leaflet.

The need for Botley West

We need to take action against climate change. We also need to improve the UK's energy security. Botley West can support this by providing affordable, renewable, and home-grown electricity.

Impacts of climate change

The effects of climate change can be seen around us, both nationally and globally. Wildfires have broken out more frequently across Europe and our own weather has been more temperamental. 2022 was the first year in which a temperature above 40C was recorded in the UK.² To tackle climate change the International Energy Agency (IEA) has highlighted that renewable electricity, in particular solar, is key in reducing carbon emissions and achieving 2030 targets.³

Climate change poses one of the most serious threats to food production in the UK. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has estimated that climate change could reduce the UK's stock of high-grade agricultural land by three quarters by 2050.⁴

The need for ground-mounted solar

The UK has set ambitious and legally binding targets to eliminate carbon emissions and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.⁵ Large-scale solar development is recognised as having an important role to play in helping achieve

this target. The British Energy Security Strategy, published in April 2022, outlined the aim to increase the UK's solar capacity fivefold by 2035 – equivalent to around 70 gigawatts (GW) total generation capacity.⁶

To achieve this, the UK must install an average of 4.15 GW in solar capacity per year. Whilst rooftop solar is also part of this solution, projects such as Botley West are essential to be able to reach these targets, due to its ability to produce power on a much more efficient scale.

The affordability of solar

Solar is the most affordable form of electricity in the UK,⁷ which means that it can help to reduce household energy bills caused by the continued use of gas. Botley West could reduce our reliance on foreign gas imports, providing an equivalent amount of electricity for up to 330,000 homes. The Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has identified solar as being central to the future of electricity generation in a recent report, with solar estimated to be roughly 35% cheaper than costs predicted for combined-cycle gas turbine power plant in 2025.⁸

Local climate targets

Oxfordshire has set ambitious climate targets for the county, which Botley West would contribute to. The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, signed up to by all councils within Oxfordshire, agreed a target of a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and 100% net zero carbon emissions by 2050.⁹

The need for home-grown energy infrastructure

As gas prices rise and energy bills increase, the UK is in need of a more reliable and secure supply of energy. This is essential in making us more resilient against potential blackouts, meet growing energy demands and improve our energy security. It can be achieved by increasing our own generating capacity and number of generating assets, through renewable energy projects such as Botley West.

Building infrastructure where it is needed most

Within Oxfordshire, there is a need to increase electricity generation to support demand. The county is committed to extensive growth and intends to lead on energy innovation.⁹

These targets lead to a need to increase the capacity of electricity generation within Oxfordshire. This includes both the development of connecting infrastructure, through substations built by National Grid and other electricity suppliers, as well as new generating stations, such as Botley West.

Botley West has secured a grid connection with National Grid in close proximity to the site, allowing for supporting both Oxfordshire's ambition to increase their solar generating capacity from 300 MW to 1900 MW by 2030⁹, as well as supplying electricity to an area where the demand is growing and where there is capacity to accommodate it.

² Met Office, 'Record breaking 2022 indicative of future UK climate', July 2023

³ IEA, 'Net Zero Roadmap Update', September 2023

⁴ Solar Energy UK, 'Solar farms and food security: the facts', September 2022

⁵ UK Government, 'PM recommit UK to Net Zero by 2050', September 2023

⁶ UK Government, 'British Energy Security Strategy', April 2022

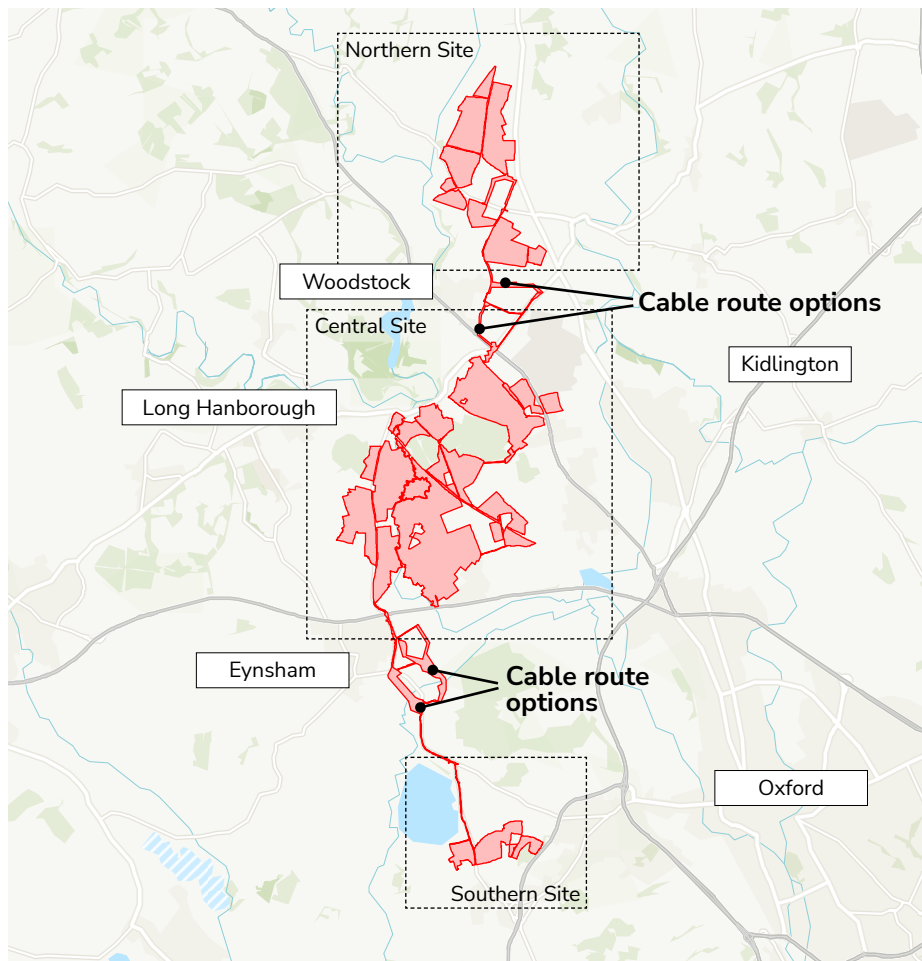
⁷ Solar Energy UK, 'Everything Under the Sun: The Facts About Solar Energy', March 2022

⁸ UK Government, 'Electricity generation costs 2023', August 2023

⁹ OXLEP, 'The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy'

Full Site Map

Our team has also put together a Preliminary Masterplan to show how the designs of Botley West will be sensitively worked into the landscape. Visualisations of the project from an eye-level perspective from agreed local viewpoints and other maps of the project can be found on our website (www.botleywest.co.uk). These show how the project the project may look just after construction before mitigation measures are in place. Further detail on mitigating landscape and visual impacts for the project can be seen on page 16 of this document, and full details can be seen in chapter 8 of our PEIR.



Our Phase Two Proposals

Since the first phase of consultation back in November and December 2022, we have sought to develop our proposals for Botley West Solar Farm in various ways to address the feedback that we received at phase one, as well as the assessment work we continue to carry out. Below highlights the key benefits of the project, as well as some of the changes that we have made since Phase One.



Botley West has an agreement to provide **840 MW of clean, affordable power** to the National Grid, providing enough electricity for the equivalent of **330,000 homes**.



Botley West has **increased minimum buffer zone distances** between solar panels and all buildings, as well as **providing significant increases to the buffer zones near residential areas**.



Botley West seeks to **increase recreational use and access across the site** through the creation of new footpaths and cycle paths.



Botley West now includes a **Landscape and Ecology Masterplan** set out on page 16 and will deliver a **minimum Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 70%**.



Botley West has **removed solar development directly south of Oxford Airport** to enable the installation of runway lighting that will improve safety.

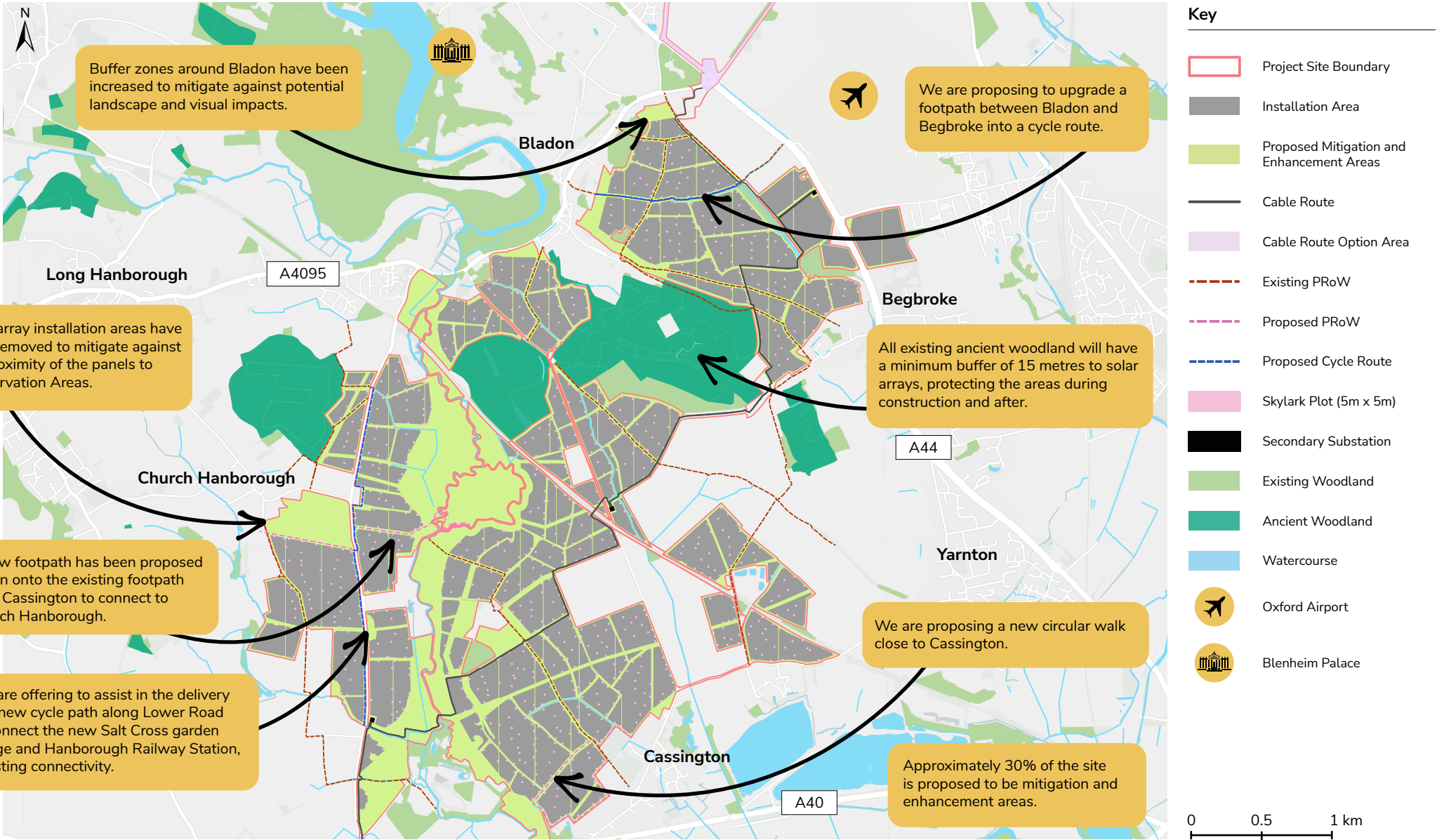


Botley West is exploring a **dynamic and wide-ranging community benefits package**, set out on page 15.

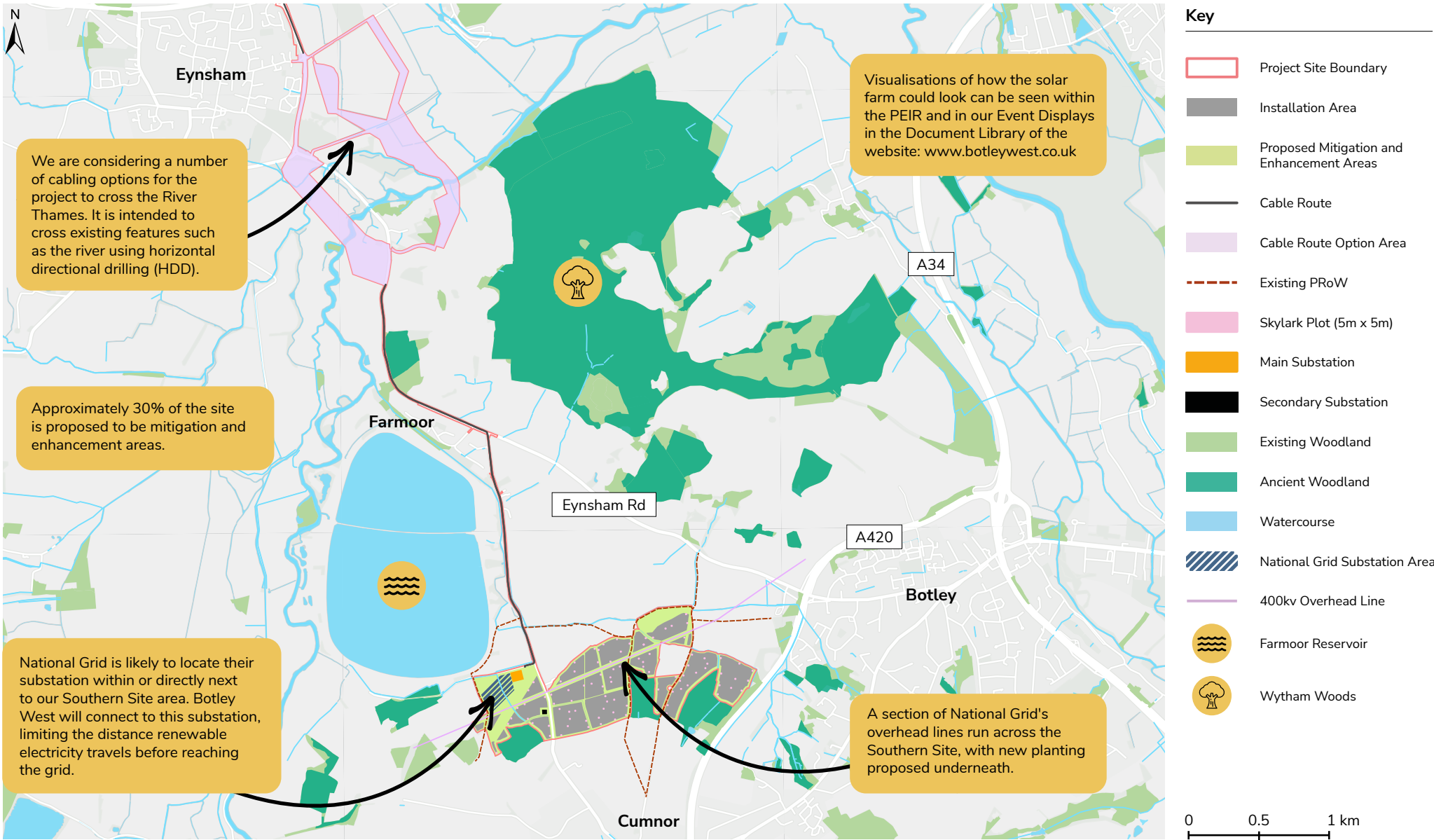
Northern Site Map



Central Site Map



Southern Site Map



Opportunities Beyond Solar

Botley West Solar Farm is committed to establishing an environmental and long-standing legacy across the area. We are committed to working with the community to inform what a package of community benefits could look like.

We are seeking to take a considered approach to delivering community benefits through Botley West. Our proposed approach is built upon three key forms of potential community benefit:

1. **Community funding:** we are committed to ensuring funding is available to support local initiatives for each year that the solar farm is operational.
2. **On-site benefits:** we are proposing to deliver benefits to local communities through the design the project, such as by increasing connectivity through new footpaths and providing areas for community food production.
3. **Helping to reduce energy bills:** in addition to the wider effect that increased solar capacity may have on UK electricity prices, we are actively exploring potential mechanisms through which the project could directly supply electricity locally at a discounted rate.

During and since the last phase of consultation, the project team has been in discussion with a number of local groups to understand how best the project can benefit the local community. We have engaged with:



Local Agricultural Groups – allocating areas of the site for community arable farming and community allotments.



Local Farmers – understanding the opportunities for sheep to graze the land.



Cherwell Collective – an organisation looking to empower those who may struggle to live sustainably by providing locally grown food to communities.



Cutteslowe Community Larder – seeking to provide food to the community at low or no cost to combat food poverty and reduce food waste.

We are exploring various on-site benefits that Botley West could deliver to local communities.



Blenheim Estate – becoming the environmental steward for the site to maintain the legacy of the area and ensure that environmental benefits are delivered. The Estate has a well-established track record of delivering green projects and their own Green Report reflects the same visions as the project. The findings from the Estate's monitoring data will ensure the accountability of any environmental commitments.



Biodiversity Net Gain - aiming to create a standard-setting environmental legacy with a minimum biodiversity net gain of 70%. More details about our biodiversity plans can be found on page 17.



Increasing Recreational Use – Botley West is exploring improvements to connectivity across the site through working with Blenheim and new proposed footpaths and cycle tracks. More details about our recreational plans can be found on page 18.

As part of our approach to deliver community benefits, we are committed to supporting the local community by:



Exploring Community Energy Opportunities - The team also appreciate that energy bills are becoming a real burden for many people. Botley West is exploring the creation of a retail energy company to sell part of the energy generated by Botley West to the local community at a discounted rate.



Establishing a Community Benefit Fund - As part of Botley West's objective to establish a legacy across the area through working with the community, we are committed to exploring making a fund available that will be similar in size to Blenheim's bursary fund of £50,000. We are seeking feedback on the potential projects and initiatives that this fund could support.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

As part of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, we are undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to inform our proposal and the design. This is a process that involves various studies being undertaken and mitigation measures proposed to reduce or remove any significant environmental impacts that are identified. The EIA process is helped by feedback received through consultation. The process is split into three main areas: the EIA scoping report, the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) and the Environmental Statement (ES).

We submitted our EIA Scoping Report to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 15th June 2023. PINS consulted with statutory consultees and published their Scoping Opinion on 24th July 2023, which will guide our EIA work.

We are now consulting on a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) which provides the initial findings of these assessments to help consultees develop an informed view of the potential environmental impacts of Botley West and our proposed approach to assessing and mitigating them. This has built upon the initial EIA scoping report, the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) Scoping Opinion and environmental assessments, in addition to the consultation feedback.

Our DCO application will include an Environmental Statement, containing the full details of the environmental assessments undertaken for Botley West and the mitigation and enhancement measures proposed.

Landscape and Visual

As part of the ongoing EIA process, we have been assessing the potential visual impact of the site upon the local area. Therefore, we have developed a Landscape Masterplan which includes the landscape and ecological strategy for implementation, long-term maintenance, and management of the Project site. We have been exploring the potential of the following mitigations:

- Creation of woodland belts.
- Planting of lengths of new hedgerows along lengths of PRoWs and reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows.
- Meadow grassland to perimeter of solar array areas and areas of enhancement.
- Planting of individual trees where appropriate.

We've taken several steps to mitigate visual impacts. This includes expanding the minimum buffer zone to 25 metres between the solar arrays and any building and increasing buffer zones near residential areas. An area of solar development has been removed to enhance safety for Oxford Airport. Furthermore, there will be no permanent operation of security lighting, instead there will be infrared sensors, which provide no visible light, and manually operated lighting will only be in the vicinity of transformers.

Visualisations of how Botley West could look can be found on the project website (www.botleywest.co.uk).

Local Ecology and Biodiversity

In assessing the local ecology and biodiversity of the project site we have been undertaking site-specific surveys, investigated habitats, and studied the various species in the area.

There are mitigation measures that the project incorporates to ensure the effects on ecology is minimised. These include:

- Establishing a minimum 5m buffer zone for hedgerows, trees, ponds and woodland, an 8m buffer for watercourses and 15m for ancient woodland
- No removal of hedgerows, woodland, waterbodies, or watercourses.
- Establishing new skylark plots between the solar arrays.
- Creating a new landscape-scale corridor along the River Evenlode.

To deliver this, PVDP is working with Blenheim Estate to ensure there is long term environmental stewardship in place, with the primary goal of supporting the project to achieve a substantial biodiversity net gain within the area, of at least 70%. This could include:

- Establishing bee hives on the site.
- Providing log piles and other refugia.
- Putting bird and bat boxes on trees.

Land Use and Agriculture

In assessing land use and agriculture, we have been conducting a number of Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) surveys. From our initial assessments, approximately 62% of the surveyed land falls under the category of lower-quality Subgrade 3b agricultural land, while 38% consists of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (ALC Grades 1-3a), with the majority of that land classed as 3a, which represents pockets of land across the site. The ALC Survey Map can be found in Figure 17.3 of the PEIR. Botley West intends to implement a comprehensive Outline Soil Management Plan.

At the end of Botley West's operational life, a comprehensive decommissioning plan, commencing two years before the lease concludes, will be executed. Our commitment is to remove all infrastructure except public highway cables, keeping the National Grid substation. The land will return to its original use, and not become brownfield land, with a dedicated reserve to cover decommissioning costs. We will be working with landowners and relevant stakeholders to explore how particular features of our proposals – such as planting, landscaping, and permissive access – could provide continued benefits by remaining in place beyond the life of the solar farm.

Recreation and Amenity

In accessing the recreation and amenity of the site, the Botley West team have been exploring ways to increase the connectivity of the site through proposing new footpaths and cycle tracks. As a part of this, we will establish a new footpath to connect Cassington and Church Hanborough. Additionally, we are enhancing the existing footpath connecting Bladon to Campsfield, located near the airport north of Begbroke, to transform it into a dedicated cycle route. Furthermore, we are exploring more opportunities where we can facilitate new routes and upgrade current ones.

Regarding the current Public Rights of Way, our primary aim is to preserve them without disruption. While temporary diversions may be necessary for safety during construction, our objective is to minimise inconvenience to users. Throughout operation, all existing routes will remain unaltered.

Hydrology and Flood Risk

Solar farms provide the opportunity to reduce the flood risk of an area. Botley West is actively exploring ways to mitigate the potential impacts of the project on hydrology and flood risk during construction and operation. This includes conducting hydrogeological risk assessments for sensitive areas.

The mitigation measures we have already put in place include:

- Incorporating a drainage strategy in various project components to mitigate surface water runoff and flood risk.
- Establishing temporary haul roads.
- Planting seeded vegetation between solar PV modules to manage surface water and erosion.
- Implementing shallow channels with seeded vegetation along the perimeter to capture excess water after heavy rainfall.
- Employing trenchless methods for crossing watercourses and flood defences.
- Maintaining a 10m buffer zone between watercourses and project development.

In addition to these mitigation measures, we are developing Pollution Prevention Plans, an Infrastructure Drainage Strategy and a Code of Construction Practice which follow environmental guidelines.

Traffic, Access, and Construction

Botley West is committed to reducing traffic and construction impacts. We've actively worked with Oxfordshire County Council Highways to address traffic concerns. To minimise disruptions, we'll include a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) in our Development Consent Order application. This CTMP will be produced collaboratively with Highway Authorities and set out routeing and traffic controls. Additionally, we'll create a travel plan for our construction staff to minimise local road traffic.

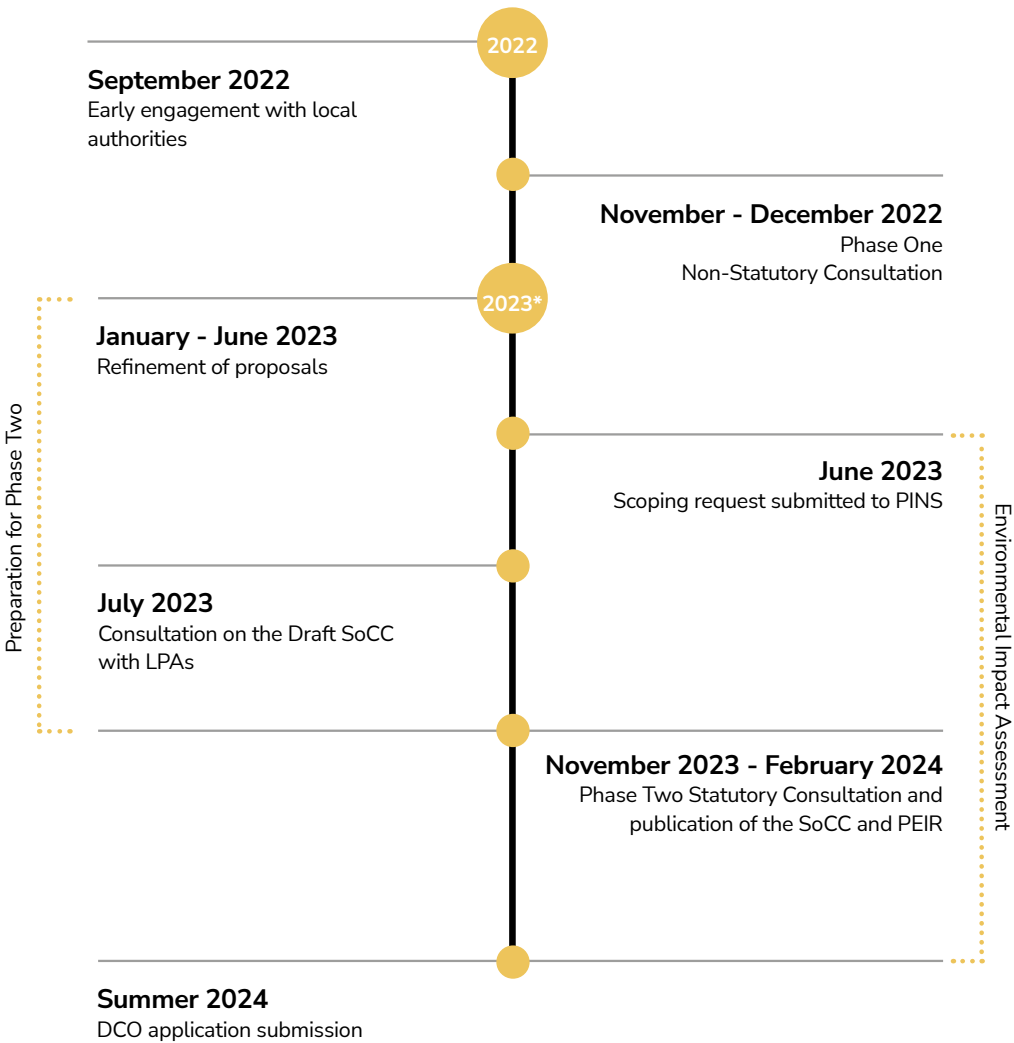
The materials used for the construction and the lifetime of the project will be as recyclable as practically possible. Up to 99% of materials in a solar panel are recyclable, and there are well-established industrial processes to do this.

Heritage and Archaeology

To assess the heritage in the area, we have been undertaking various studies, including desk-based assessments, analysis of aerial photography, geophysical survey, and site visits. A separate Heritage Impact Assessment of the World Heritage Site at Blenheim Palace has also been commenced. From this initial work, no significant heritage impacts have been identified in the PEIR. However, to achieve this and protect the heritage of the area, mitigation measures and buffer zones have been carefully designed to protect the built heritage and features of likely archaeological interest.

- Heritage assets have been excluded from the project site, in that land within conservation areas will not undergo solar development but will instead be used for environmental purposes.
- Specifically, two areas of land comprising parts of Conservation Areas in Bladon and Church Hanborough are to be used for environmental mitigation, rather than for project development.
- Significant archaeological sites will be preserved, while less significant ones may employ a 'no-dig' approach where solar panels could utilise 'concrete shoes' to avoid any disturbance to the ground.
- Effects on heritage assets are considered reversible, and impacts on buried archaeological remains are deemed insignificant, ensuring the responsible progress of our Project.

Indicative Project timeline



All future dates are indicative and subject to change.

Information Events

Over the consultation period, we are holding nine in-person information events and one online community webinar to give you an opportunity to speak to members of the project team directly and ask any questions you may have. You are welcome to drop-in to an event at any time.

Location	Date & Time
2023	
Bladon Methodist Church, 28 Park Street, Bladon, OX20 1RW	Friday 8th December 2023 3pm - 7:30pm
Woodstock Community Centre, 32 New Road, OX20 1PB	Saturday 9th December 2023 11am - 3pm
Begbroke Village Hall, 3 Begbroke Lane, Kidlington, OX5 1RN	Tuesday 12th December 2023 3pm - 7:30pm
Hanborough Pavilion & Village Hall, Roosevelt Road, OX29 8JG	Wednesday 13th December 2023 1pm - 5pm
2024	
Cassington Village Hall, The Green, OX29 4AX	Friday 12th January 2024 3pm - 7:30pm
Woodstock Community Centre, 32 New Road, OX20 1PB	Saturday 13th January 2024 11am - 3pm
Cumnor Village Hall, Leys Road, OX2 9QF	Wednesday 17th January 2024 3pm - 7:30pm
Seacourt Hall, 3 Church Way, Botley, OX2 9TH	Thursday 18th January 2024 1pm - 5pm
Eynsham Village Hall, 46 Back Ln, Eynsham, OX29 4QW	Friday 19th January 2024 2pm - 6pm
Community Webinar Register your attendance here	Tuesday 23rd January 2024 5.30pm - 7pm

Details on how to access our Community Webinar can be found on our website: www.botleywest.co.uk.

If you have any issues accessing the webinar, please contact the team through the project's communication channels listed on the back cover of this leaflet.

Community Access Points

To ensure that our consultation is as accessible as possible, we have designated Community Access Points. These are locations in the vicinity of the site area where you are able to access our Phase Two consultation materials. At these sites you will be able to access:

- Additional copies of this leaflet
- Our phase two feedback form
- A copy of the full PEIR for the project, available to view
- A non-technical summary of the PEIR, available to view

You can also access all of our information materials on our project website. If you would like documents in large print, audio, or braille formats, please contact us.

Our Community Access Points are at the following locations:

Location	Opening Times
Woodstock Library Fletchers House, Park St, Woodstock, OX20 1SN	Tues – Fri: 10am - 1pm, 2pm - 5pm Sat: 10am - 12.30pm, 1pm - 4.30pm Sun: 2pm - 5pm Mon: Closed
West Oxfordshire District Council Town Centre Shop 3 Welch Way, Witney, OX28 6JH	Mon – Fri: 9am - 5pm Sat & Sun: Closed
Kidlington Library 23 Oxford Rd, Kidlington, OX5 2BP	Mon & Thurs: 9.30am - 5pm Tues & Fri: 9.30am - 7pm Weds: 9.30am - 1pm Sat: 9am - 4.30pm Sun: Closed
Botley Library 5a Church Way, Botley, Oxford, OX2 9TH	Mon, Tues & Thurs: 9.30am - 5.30pm Fri: 9.30am - 7pm Sat: 9.30am - 1pm Weds & Sun: Closed
Eynsham Library 30 Mill Street, Eynsham, OX29 4JS	Mon: 9.30am-1pm and 2pm and 5pm Wed & Thurs: 1pm-5pm Friday: 1-7pm Sat: 9.30-1pm

Contact us



Email: info@botleywest.co.uk



Freephone Information Line: 0808 175 3085

(Open Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Voice-mails can be left outside of these hours)



Freepost: BWSF

You will not need a stamp to send any correspondence to the freepost address



Website: www.botleywest.co.uk

Please scan the QR code to visit our website and view more information on Botley West.



If anyone needs this document in large print, audio or braille formats, please contact us using the details above.

Please note that all graphics and maps in this document are for illustrative purposes.